

The chambres and the stables weren wyde
And wel we weren esed atte beste.
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,
So hadde I spoken with hem everichon,
That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,
And made forward erly for to ryse
To take oure wey, ther as I yow devyse.
But natheles, whil I have tyme and space,
Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun,
To telle yow al the condicioun
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degree,
And eek in what array that they were inne;
And at a Knyght than wol I first bigynne.

The
Knyght

AKNYGHTE ther was & that a worthy
man,
That fro the tyme that he first bigan
To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
Trouthe and honour, fredom and
curteisie.

ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
And evere honoured for his worthynesse.
At Alisaundre he was, whan it was wonne;
ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
Aboven alle nacions in Pruce.
In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,
No cristen man so ofte of his degree.
In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be
Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.
At Iycys was he, and at Satalye,
Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See
At many a noble army hadde he be.
At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
And foughten for oure feith at Tramysene
In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.
This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also
Somtyme with the lord of Palatye
Agayn another hethen in Turkye;
And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.
He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde
In al his lyf unto no maner wight;
He was a verray parfit gentil knyght.
But for to tellen yow of his array,
His hors were goode, but he was nat gay;
Of fustian he wered a gypoun
At bismotered with his habergeoun;
for he was late ycome from his viage,
And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.

The
Squier

ATH hym ther was his sone, a yong
Squier,
A lovyre and a lusty bacheler,
With lokkes crulle as they were leyd
in presse;
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
And wonderly delyvere and of greet strengthe,
And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie,
In flaundres, in Artoys and Pycardie,
And born hym weel, as of so litel space,

In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
Embrouded was he, as it were a meede
Al ful of freshe floures whyte and reede;
Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;
He was as fressh as is the monthe of May.
Short was his gowne, with sleeves longe and wyde;
Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde;
He koude songes make and wel endite,
Juste, & eek daunce, and weel purtreie and write.
So hoot he lovede, that by nyghtertale
He slepte namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale;
Curteis he was, lowely and servysable,
And carf biforn his fader at the table.

YEMAN hadde he, & servants namo
At that tyme, for him liste ride soo;
And he was clad in cote and hood of
grene;

A sheef of pecok arwes bright and
kene
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily,
Wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly;
His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe,
And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.
A not heed hadde he, with a broun visage;
Of woode craft wel koude he al the usage.
Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,
And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that oother syde a gay daggere,
Harnessed wel and sharpe as point of spere;
A Cristophre on his brest of silver sheene.
An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene;
A forster was he, soothly, as I gesse.

WHER was also a Nonne, a Prioressse,
That of hir smylyng was ful symple
and coy;
Hire gretteste ooth was but by seint
Loy,

And she was cleped madame
Egleyntyne.
ful weel she soong the service dyvyne
Entuned in hir nose ful semeely;
And frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly
After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,
for frenssh of Darys was to hir unknowe.
At mete wel ytaught was she withalle,
She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe.
Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe,
That no drope ne fille upon hire brist;
In curteisie was set ful muchel hir list.
Hire over lippe wyped she so clene,
That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene
Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte;
ful semeely after hir mete she raughte.
And sikerly she was of greet desport,
And ful plesaunt and amyable of port.
And peyned hire to countrefete cheere
Of court, and to been estatlich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous,
She wolde wepe if that she saugh a mous
Kaight in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde

The
Monk

With roasted flesh, or milk and wastel breed;
But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte,
And al was conscience and tendre herte.
ful semly hir wimpul pynched was;
Hire nose tretys, hire eyen greye as glas,
Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed;
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed,
It was almoost a spanne brood I trowe;
for hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war;
Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,
And theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,
On which ther was first write a crowned A,
And after, Amor vincit omnia.
Another Nonne with hire hadde she,
That was hir Chapeleyn, and preestes thre.

MONK ther was, a fair for the mais-
trie,
An out/ridere that lovede venerie;
A manly man, to been an abbot able.
ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in
stable,

And whan he rood men myghte his brydel heere
Gynglen in a whistlyng wynd als cleere,
And eek as loude, as dooth the chapel belle.
Theras this lord was kepere of the celle,
The reule of seint Maure or of seint Benoit,
Bycause that it was old and somdel streit,
This ilke monk leet olde thynges pace,
And heeld after the newe world the space.
He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
That seith that hunters beth nat hooly men,
Ne that a monk whan he is reccheles
Is likned til a fish that is waterlees;
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre;
But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;
And I seyde his opinioun was good.
What sholde he studie & make himselfen wood
Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,
Or swynken with his handes, and laboure,
As Austyn bi? How shal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved.
Therefore he was a prikasour aright;
Grehoundes he hadde, as swift as fowel in flight.
Of prikyng and of hunting for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I seigh his sleeves ypurfiled at the hond
With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;
And for to festne his hood under his chyn
He hadde of gold ywrought a curious pyn,
A loveknotte in the gretter end ther was.
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as it hadde been enoynt;
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt.
Hise eyen stepe, and rollyng in his heed,
That stemmed as a forneys of a leed;
His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.
Now certeinly he was a fair prelaat.
He was nat pale, as a forpynd goost;
A fat swan loved he best of any roost;
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.

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FRERE ther was, a wantowne and a
merye,
A lymytour, a ful solemne man,
In alle the ordres foure is noon that
kan

The frere

So muchel of daliaunce & fair langage;
He hadde maad ful many a mariage
Of yonge wommen at his owene cost;
Unto his ordre he was a noble post.
And wel biloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns over al in his contree;
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;
for he hadde power of confessioun,
As seyde hymself, moore than a curat,
for of his ordre he was licenciat.
ful swetely herde he confessioun,
And plesaunt was his absolucioun.
He was an esy man to yeve penaunce,
Theras he wiste to have a good pitaunce;
for unto a povre ordre for to yive
Is signe that a man is wel yshryve;
for if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,
He wiste that a man was repentaunt;
for many a man so harde is of his herte,
He may nat wepe although hym soore smerte,
Therefore, in stede of wepyng and preyes,
Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.
His tytel was ay farsed ful of knyves
And pynnes, for to yeven yonge wyves;
And certeinly he hadde a murye note,
Wel koude he synge and pleyen on a rote;
Of yeddynge he baar outrely the pris.
His nekke whit was as the flour de lyls,
Therto he strong was as a champion.
He knew the tavernes wel in al the toun,
And everich hostiler and tappestere
Bet than a lazar or a beggestere;
for unto swich a worthy man as he
Acorded nat, as by his facultee,
To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce;
It is nat honeste, it may nat avaunce
for to deelen with no swich poraille,
But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.
And overal, ther as profit sholde arise,
Curteis he was, and lowely of servyse.
Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous;
He was the beste beggere in his hous;
for thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,
So plesaunt was his In principio,
Yet wolde he have a ferthyng er he wente.
His purchas was wel bettre than his rente;
And rage he koude as it were right a whelpe.
In love dayes ther koude he muchel helpe,
for there he was nat lyk a cloysterer
With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scoler,
But he was lyk a maister or a pope.
Of double worstede was his semycupe,
That rounded as a belle out of the presse.
Somwhat he lipped for his wantownesse,
To make his Englissh sweete upon his tonge,
And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,
Hise eyen twynkled in his heed aryght,
As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.
This worthy lymytour was cleped Huberd.

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